

THE BOSTON INFORMER

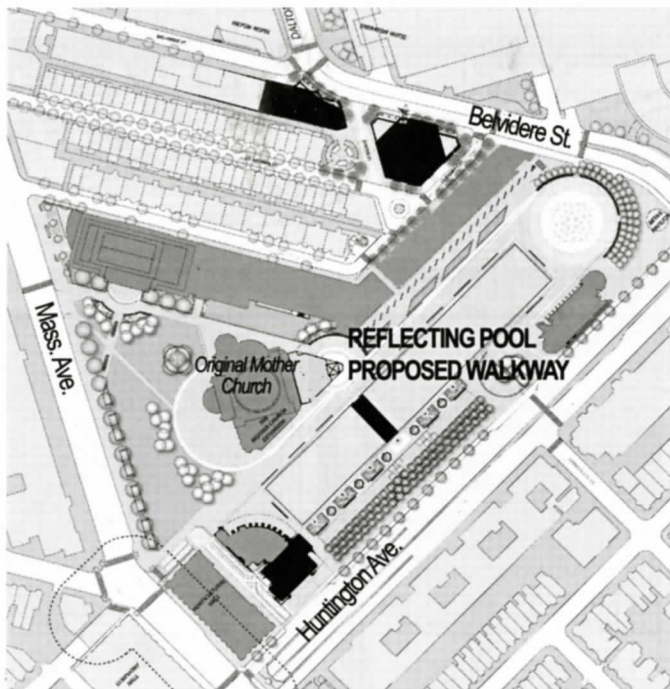
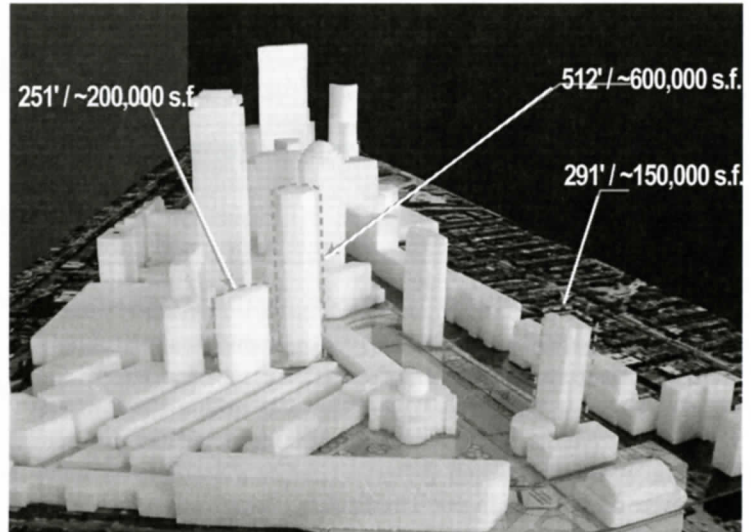
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Summer 2010

First Church of Christ Master Plan

Christian Science Center – The First Church of Christ, Scientist has proposed a plan for the development of the Christian Science Center Plaza in Back Bay/South End. The plan features developing approximately 950,000 s.f. in three new buildings. Two of the new buildings are proposed for the Dalton Street/Belvidere Street parking lot and the third for the area along Huntington Avenue near the Sunday School building. The proposed Dalton/Belvidere buildings are 512 feet high (45 stories) and 251 feet high (20 stories). The taller building is characterized as a “high rise” and the



Source for both images: Elkus Manfredi Architects. Used courtesy of The First Church of Christ, Scientist.

smaller as “mid rise.” The proposed building on Huntington Avenue would be slightly smaller at 291 feet (shorter than the existing 177 Huntington Ave. office building at 25 stories) and would contain 150,000 s.f. of office space.

Impacts from new shadows would generally be on Christian Science land or on rooftops to the north of the plaza, although the plan states that a small portion of the Southwest Corridor Park would be in shadow in the early evening in summer. To achieve the plan’s first objective, “enhance open space,” the plan proposes rebuilding the reflecting pool/fountain 18 feet shorter, reducing the depth from 26 inches to 6-12 inches and creating a pedestrian walkway along the path of a previous walkway that existed before redevelopment in the 1960s. The popular spray fountain is to remain and water use will be reduced from 5 million gallons per year to 2 million. The master plan will be reviewed under Article 80 of the zoning code and additional details on the proposed buildings will also undergo Article 80 review.

Longfellow Bridge Rehabilitation —

MassDOT is nearing completion of its Task Force work to develop alternatives for the Longfellow Bridge cross-section and allocation of pavement and lanes. MassDOT convened the Task Force in June 2010 to broaden the alternatives it would study in the federal Environmental Assessment.

MassDOT's original proposal was to maintain two travel lanes in each direction and widen the sidewalks and bike lanes. The bridge itself is historic and cannot be widened. More than eight alternatives have been generated through the Task Force, including alternatives with one lane in each direction, giant bike lanes big enough for a family to ride side by side, “hourglass”

scheme with the middle of the bridge narrowing to one lane to allow social activities to take place on the widened sidewalks. Progress is happening as the Task Force narrowed alternatives at the Sept. 29 meeting, and MassDOT agreed that one lane toward Cambridge was acceptable.

In addition, MassDOT is studying a new pedestrian bridge from Charles Circle to the Esplanade to replace the existing non-ADA compliant and inadequate pedestrian bridge as well as improved connections to parkland and bikeways from the bridge in the Cambridge side.

A public meeting Oct. 6 at the Shriners Hospital Auditorium will review progress to date. See <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Highway/abp/longfellow.aspx> for details on the Task Force and alternatives.

Bulfinch Triangle Developer Shuffle

In May 2010 MassDOT issued a default notice to the developer of Central Artery Project parcels in the Bulfinch Triangle near North Station. Hines Raymond LP was in default for failing to start construction of a 360,000 s.f., \$200 million mixed-use project in two years after approval. Hines Raymond had proposed to house a supermarket—particularly desired by North End residents.

MassDOT designated a new developer, Trinity Financial of Boston, to build a \$150 million project with ground-floor retail, second-floor supermarket, parking on floor 3, and apartments on floors 6–8. Construction could start in 2012 subject to the project securing financing. ICON architecture, inc., designers of the adjacent Avenir apartment, also developed by Trinity, is the new architect.

Cambridge

Pru Center Exeter Street Apartments

Boston Properties and AvalonBay Communities are back with their proposed residential development on Exeter Street, first presented almost three years ago. The \$90 million development would be 187 units in 28 stories. At 311 feet high, the proposed building would be one of the tallest in the Back Bay (Prudential Tower is 749 feet high). The PruPAC approved the proposed project after it was first advanced. Architect: Elkus Manfredi.

Seaport Sq. on So. Boston Waterfront

The Boston Redevelopment Authority has given zoning approval to a slightly downsized Seaport Square mixed-use development (see The Boston Informer, Issue 86, July 2008). The proposed project in total would be the biggest single development in Boston's recent history. Still needed is Zoning Commission approval.

The \$3 billion proposal by Morgan Stanley, Gale International and retail developer WS Development (of Dedham's Legacy Place fame) comprises 23 acres of land, now primarily parking lots. These would become 20 city blocks, 6.3 million s.f. of development in 22 buildings, including office, hotels, retail, residences, and an "innovation" building and public parks with 6,375 parking spaces.

Construction is planned over 10 years, starting with ground-breaking next year for an apartment building and "innovation center." One of the major unresolved issues is the adequacy of public transportation. The developers are relying on the Silver Line and other buses to carry 34 percent to 62 percent (depending on land use) of the peak-hour trips to and from the proposed project. For comparison, the transit-rich Back Bay (three commuter rail lines, Orange and Green lines, local and express bus) achieves about 45 percent of peak-hour office trips by transit.



Source: CBT

407 Newbury St. — Formerly known as 93 Massachusetts Ave., plans to renovate and build new on this site have changed. In 2008, the plan was to renovate the existing four-story building (right in photo) and replace the one-story building. Now Kingston Realty Trust LLC proposes to renovate and build a four-story building (left in photo) that will be reviewed under Article 80 Small Project Review. The project is within the Interim Planning Overlay District for downtown which caps heights at 65 feet. Plans for the new addition to be metal clad have been scrapped. The building will be faced with a terra cotta exterior to blend in better with Back Bay materials. Construction is planned for 2011. Architect: CBT.



Source: CBT

157 Berkeley St./Liberty Mutual — Approved by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the proposed 22-story office building at Berkeley Street and Columbus Avenue has sparked controversy because of a relatively small element on Stuart Street. A footbridge to connect the new building to existing Liberty Mutual buildings is of concern to the Boston Civic Design Commission and the Stuart Street Corridor Planning Group. Neither group supports the footbridge and opposed it during the review period. Maybe the BRA was convinced by statements supporting the bridge for the construction jobs. So much for the recent planning process. The proposed footbridge in fact will reduce the visual quality of Stuart Street as well as add no life to the street and sidewalk, a usual benefit of a 590,000 s.f. downtown office building. Silliest of all is the BRA's requirement to create a park as mitigation for the bridge. How will the park lessen the impacts of the bridge?

Downsizing Proposed Waterside Place—Waterside Place, a proposed mixed-use development on 10.3 acres of former Massport land between Summer and Congress streets in South Boston, was designed to meet the demand for residential and retail in the growing Seaport District. In 2007 the Core Development Group, managing partner The Drew Co., proposed 209 residential units, a 300-room hotel, 640,000 s.f. of retail, a 20,000-s.f. visitors center and a 2,350-space parking garage.

Two years later, with development in the Seaport District slowed to a trickle, the developer proposed eliminating most of the retail and switched from condominiums to apartments. Now the developer is proposing to build Waterside Place in phases, with the first phase comprising 235 retail units, 69,000 s.f. of retail, a 13,000 s.f. innovation center (call us immediately if you know what that means), and parking for 175–275 cars (to be determined). Construction of this phase is planned to start in early 2011 and be completed in two years.



Source: The Drew Co. Waterside Place NPC, 2010

What's Up?

Expand the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center?

Whispers about expanding the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (BCEC) sent us back to review the conception and birth of the BCEC starting in 1998. The original 1998 Environmental Notification Form for the BCEC (see The Boston Informer, Issue 36, July/Aug. 1998) proposed a publicly financed 1.7 million-s.f. building on a 60-acre site with 592,000 s.f. of exhibit space, meeting rooms, a 6,000-s.f. ballroom and 2,000 underground parking spaces. The enabling legislation (Ch. 152 of the Acts of 1997) prohibited "gate shows" (open to the public) because of unfair competition between a taxpayer-subsidized facility and a private hall like Bayside Expo. The BCEC opened in 2004 and an adjacent privately financed 1,120-room hotel opened soon after.

When the BCEC failed to meet projections for attendance and hotel room nights, the ban on "gate shows" was removed (Bayside subsequently failed). The BCEC also took some business from the Hynes Convention Center in Back bay. Both centers are owned by the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA). MCCA is now proposing to expand the BCEC by 400,000 s.f. of additional exhibition space, a 5,000-seat auditorium and a 75,000-s.f. ballroom. And since the number of hotel rooms close to BCEC didn't materialize at the pace needed, MCCA proposes to build a taxpayer-financed 1,000-room hotel.

Critics ask why expand a facility that is doing only about half the business originally projected. Further, in addition to the capital costs, will a bigger facility need an even bigger taxpayer subsidy than the \$35 million subsidy provided in 2009? Oh, yes—we can't forget that a) expansion has always been about jobs and b) nationwide, "every convention center requires an operating subsidy."

BRA Greenway District Study (See TBI Issue 94, spring 2010) was approved by the BRA Board in August with just one change to the draft guidelines. North End residents and leaders pushed for limiting all of its Greenway buildings to 55 feet and rejected the study's 85-foot limit for Parcel 11B. Approved guidelines are just the first step: new zoning and changes to the current Municipal Harbor Plan governing land subject to Ch. 91, Public Waterfront Act, will follow.

'Liberty Wharf' in So. Boston Seaport District

(formerly part of Boston Fish Pier and site of the former Jimmy's Harborside restaurant) is nearing completion. Originally announced in 2008 as a \$30 million project, the now \$60-million project is a three-building complex developed by Cresset Development LLC. Located opposite the Seaport Hotel on Northern Avenue, the project features a main building that will house three restaurants with office space on the upper floor; a second building will be a 20,000 s.f. (huge!) Legal Seafoods restaurant; and the third will be a large kiosk for a cafe or wine bar.

PEOPLE MOVERS

Anne Collins, executive director of the Commonwealth's Accelerated Bridge Program Council, to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Washington, D.C.

Colin Durrant, from MassDOT public affairs to Harvard University's sustainability initiatives.

Lisa Signori, from Boston budget chief, to Perkins School for the Blind.

Julie Burns, from Boston director of arts, tourism, and special events to Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Welcome to The Boston Informer

The goal is simple: Provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The Boston Informer is published by ATC Information, Inc., five times yearly in Boston, Massachusetts. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

The Boston Informer is available by mail only. \$25.00 per year (cheap!). Questions? Telephone (617) 723-7030, fax (617) 437-1886 or e-mail: BostonInformer@cs.com. Check us out on the Web at www.bostoninformer.com!

MassDOT is working with pedestrian & bike advocates to rehabilitate and possibly 'transform' the Longfellow Bridge...



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Longfellow Bridge future?

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You Were Asking

- Q. I heard the Friends of Copley Square is back. True?**
A. Yes. The almost defunct Friends of Copley Square has reorganized after three years of inactivity. The Trust reports its endowment is nearing the \$1.5 million mark required to deal with park maintenance issues. Plans are underway to revive holiday and other traditional events. FOCS chair: Paul Tormey, Fairmont Copley Plaza; Presiden: Dan Donohue, Lenox Hotel. Contact FOCS care of Back Bay Assn., 617-266-1991.
- Q. Is the restaurant planned for the end of Long Wharf, Doc's, ever going to be built?**
A. The Boston Informer covered this project in fall 2006. It has been approved by all relevant agencies, but a group of North End residents filed suit in Massachusetts Superior Court to block it. Opposition stems from fears of noise and rowdiness.
- Q. I read that the planned Edward M. Kennedy Institute near the John F. Kennedy Library in Dorchester is receiving \$59 million in federal funds in addition to about \$50 million in private funds, Why are taxpayers contributing so much to a private institution?**
A. Look at the name.
- Q. I heard UMass Boston's Master Plan includes its first dormitories. My daughter will be applying to college in two years—will the dorms be ready?**
A. No. A small number of beds (2,000) are in later phases of the campus development, possibly as far off as 20+ years. Overall, the \$1 billion Master Plan will add close to 2.5 times more gross s. f., but Phase 1 will build only one building, a 217,000 s. f. Integrated Sciences Complex. Of note is Master Plan projects are expected to generate about 15,400 new campus trips, most of which will be on transit, leaving 1,825-2,606 new auto trips (numbers vary in Master Plan and Environmental Notification Form). Yet there is no explanation of how the existing shuttle bus service will be expanded to accommodate thousands of new transit trips and what entity is responsible.